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REGIONAL COOPERATION

Letter dated 16 April 1991 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

I have the honour to inform you of Israel's request to be admitted as a full member of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) during the second regular session of the Economic and Social Council, to be held at Geneva in July 1991. The agenda item dealing with regional cooperation could serve as the appropriate framework in which to consider this matter.

It will be recalled that Israel submitted a previous request for admission, dated 2 May 1986 (E/1986/82). This request was not brought to a conclusive determination.

Since Israel has been unable to become a member of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the regional commission to which it should belong, Israel is now seeking membership in ECE for the following reasons.

For many years, Israel has been an observer in ECE because of the fundamental economic relations that exist between Israel and the European Community, as well as with the United States of America, with both of which Israel has a free trade agreement. Based upon these relations and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, Israel strongly believes it has a right to participate as a full member in the regional activities of the Economic and Social Council.

In addition, Israel is a member and active participant in the European regional activities of such international organizations as the International Labour Organisation, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization, the World Meteorological Organization and the World Tourism Organization.

It should be noted that the original members of ECE include the European members of the United Nations and the United States of America. Subsequently, rule 7 of the ECE terms of reference was changed twice - on one occasion to include another non-European member of the United Nations - Canada (Council resolution 1810 (LV)), and on another occasion to include a European country that is not a member of the United Nations - Switzerland (Council resolution 1600 (LI)). In both cases, the exceptions were made because the applying countries had been involved in ECE work as observers for many years and had strong economic interests in Europe. These same circumstances also apply to Israel.

In accordance with the principles of sovereign equality and universality, which are the basis of the United Nations, Israel is entitled, as is any other Member State, to participate fully in the regional economic activities of the organization.

Since 1986, quite extraordinary changes have taken place in the European region. Israel therefore believes that the time is now propitious to renew its application for membership in ECE, in order that its basic right, as a member of the United Nations, for membership in a regional commission be not only fully recognized, but also effectively implemented.

The request is made without prejudice to Israel's right to be a member of ESCWA. Clearly, membership in ECE will come to an end as soon as Israel takes its place in ESCWA.

I have the honour to ask for your cooperation in this matter, and request that this letter of application be distributed among the members of the Economic and Social Council as an official document of the Council.

(Signed) Yoram ARIDOR
Ambassador
Permanent Representative